

## New iPad impresses, but not enough to reverse negative tablet sales trend

October 30 2014, by Troy Wolverton, San Jose Mercury News

---



Apple recently released a pair of new iPads, one of which is a real winner. But as snazzy as it is, the new model may do little to change Apple's declining position in the tablet market.

The company pioneered the modern tablet with the iPad back in 2010 and has, at least in my view, continued to set the pace since then, offering the best standard-size device on the market. The new iPad Air 2 is the next step in that direction. Apple has taken what was already an

excellent tablet and made it better.

It's noticeably thinner and lighter than last year's model, the original Air. According to Apple, it's also significantly faster. The chip at the heart of the iPad Air 2 is 40 percent faster than that in last year's model and offers 2 { times the graphics performance.

My quick tests confirmed the bump in speed. You probably won't notice the difference for a while, not until app developers start to write programs that tap into that power. But you'll probably appreciate it over the long term; that processing power will most likely allow your iPad to run new programs and keep up with operating system updates for years to come.

The Air 2 has a much better camera than last year's model, one that's comparable in terms of resolution and most features to what you'll find in the latest iPhones. Like those devices, the iPad can now shoot slow-motion videos and take multiple photographs in succession. Both of these features worked well in my tests, and regular pictures from the iPad appear sharper than before.

The new device also gets the TouchID fingerprint sensor that Apple debuted with last year's iPhone. Owners can use it to sign into the device, log in to apps and to verify purchases inside apps using the new Apple Pay service. Unlike the new iPhones, though, owners can't use Apple Pay on the Air 2 to make payments in physical stores because it lacks the near-field communications radio needed for such transactions.

In my tests, TouchID worked as expected. It logged me into the device quickly, and I was able to use it to instantly approve app downloads in Apple's App Store. Its one big shortcoming is that Apple hasn't yet linked it to the ability to create separate user log-ins on the iPad. If you set up the sensor to recognize your kid or roommate's finger so they can

also use your iPad, you might inadvertently give them the ability to make purchases with your credit card also.

The other new tablet Apple unveiled was the iPad Mini 3, its update to last year's second Mini model, which was previously called the iPad Mini with Retina Display. The Mini 3 is much less impressive than the Air 2, because it's little more than a warmed-over version of last year's model. It has the same screen, the same processor and camera. The only significant difference is it now has Apple's TouchID fingerprint sensor. Also, if you buy one of the two more expensive versions of the Mini 3, you'll get twice as much storage as you did last year.

The new iPads come as Apple's tablet business has been slumping amid a slowing overall market.

In the four years since the original iPad debuted, the portion of U.S. households with a tablet grew from basically zero to an astonishing 50 percent.

But consumers' love affair with the tablet appears to be hitting the skids. Overall tablet shipments worldwide grew by less than 5 percent in the first quarter and by only 11 percent in the second quarter, according to IDC. Meanwhile, Apple has seen its iPad shipments decline on a year-over-year basis in four of the past six quarters.

Apple in particular has lost sales to cheaper devices, analysts say. While you can find Android-based tablets for as little as \$50, the cheapest iPad sells for \$250, and that's a 2-year-old model.

But tablet sales in general have been losing out to other devices. Consumers have come to see tablets as a nice-to-have accessory, not a must-have item, analysts say. Given the choice, many would rather buy a new smartphone than buy or upgrade a tablet.

Tablets also seem to be suffering from a lack of innovation, analysts say. Yes, the iPad's gotten thinner and faster, but it basically looks the same as it did when it debuted, and the newest models don't do a whole lot more than the originals.

"It's really hard to make remarkable innovation, because it was a pretty good product anyway," said Mika Kitagawa, who covers the tablet business for tech research firm Gartner. And because of that lack of "remarkable" innovation, she added, "it's really hard to make or convince people to buy tablets more often or replace tablets more often."

The new iPads are a case in point. Before Apple's press event, there were rumors that the company might make a dramatic announcement, possibly introducing a new 12-inch model that could double as a notebook. But what the company showed instead was fairly underwhelming.

Even the changes in the Air 2 are evolutionary, not revolutionary. If you've got a recent iPad, there's nothing about the Air 2 that will make you want to ditch it for the new one. And if you haven't yet bought an iPad, I don't think there's anything about the Air 2 that's going to convince you it's time.

And so, despite the new devices, Apple's [tablet](#) business seems likely to remain stuck in place.

—

What: Apple iPad Air 2

Likes: Thinner and lighter than last year's model; faster processor; TouchID fingerprint sensor; new, higher-resolution camera with ability to do slow-motion videos and burst photographs; pricier models offer

more storage than last year; broad and numerous app selection.

Dislikes: Lacks support for multiple user log-ins; lacks ability to display more than one app at a time; relatively pricey.

Specs:

Price: For Wi-Fi-only versions, \$500 for 16GB, \$600 for 64GB and \$700 for 128GB models; LTE models are \$130 more for each storage level.

Web: [apple.com](http://apple.com)

©2014 San Jose Mercury News (San Jose, Calif.)

Distributed by MCT Information Services

Citation: New iPad impresses, but not enough to reverse negative tablet sales trend (2014, October 30) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-10-ipad-reverse-negative-tablet-sales.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.